

**REMARKS**

**Rejection Under 35 USC 102(b)**

Claims 42-44 and 47-52 have been rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Preller. In response to this rejection, independent Claims 42 and 48 have been amended to specify that the spacing between adjacent first and second elongated connectors is sufficient to facilitate adjustment of the first component relative to the second component in a direction parallel to the wound or incision. This distinction between Applicant's invention and the cited prior art was discussed in the personal interview conducted on May 27, 2004. This limitation is intended to embody the concept of "lateral adjustment" as discussed during the personal interview.

**Double Patenting Rejection**

Claims 42, 44, 45 and 47-51 have been rejected under the judicially-created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over Claims 1, 4 and 18-20 of US Patent No. 6,329,564. In response to this rejection, Applicant has prepared and submitted concurrently an executed Terminal Disclaimer. It is respectfully submitted that the filing of this document serves to obviate the grounds of rejection.

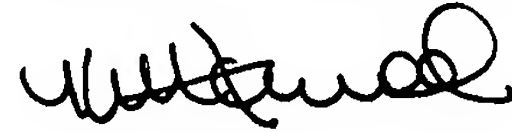
**Allowable Subject Matter**

Claims 42 and 48 have been amended to incorporate the limitations of formerly dependent Claims 46 and 53. As indicated in the Examiner Interview Summary issued on June 9, 2004, this amendment places Claims 42 and 48, and claims dependent therefrom, in condition for allowance.

Summary

In light of the above amendment, consideration of the subject patent application is respectfully requested. Any deficiency or overpayment should be charged or credited to Deposit Account No. 500282.

Respectfully submitted,



Kevin M. Farrell  
Attorney for Applicants  
Registration No. 35,505  
(603) 433-6300

Portsmouth, NH

Date:

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